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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR  
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#)  
SUBJECT: WEST BANK REACTIONS TO START OF IDF GROUND  
OPERATIONS IN GAZA

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Since IDF ground operations began in the Gaza Strip on January 3, the West Bank has seen continued demonstrations. Faction leaders, including jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, are calling for unity and joint protests. PA security forces (PASF) continue to prevent clashes with IDF forces. The PLO Executive Committee on January 4 called for an end to the Israeli military operation and urged Arab support for a UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR). End Summary.

Demonstrations Continue;  
Calls for Factional Unity  
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12. (C) Demonstrations have continued in West Bank cities and villages since IDF ground operations in Gaza began January 3. The PA has permitted protests, but insisted that no factional flags be displayed. On instructions from PM Fayyad, PASF have used overt and covert officers to control demonstrations, and have prevented crowds from marching to checkpoints and other areas of potential friction with IDF soldiers. Students demonstrated January 5 at Birzeit University, prompting a suspension of classes. They tried to march to the 'Atara checkpoint, but were stopped and dispersed by PASF shooting live ammunition in the air.

13. (C) Jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti released a January 4 statement from prison, urging Palestinian national unity to counter the on-going IDF operations in Gaza. He applauded local and international demonstrations against Israeli actions and urged Fatah and other factions to "join forces in combating the Israeli occupation." A West Bank member of the Fatah youth organization (al-Shabiba) told Poloff January 5 that Fatah youth will continue to demonstrate in solidarity with Gazans and support of a ceasefire.

14. (C) The National and Islamic Forces, which includes Fatah, Hamas, PIJ, PFLP, PFLP-GC, DFLP, PPP, PPSF, FIDA, and other PLO and non-PLO factions, called for commercial strikes and a closure of the universities in Hebron on January 5. Head of the ICRC Hebron office Matteo Benatti told Poloff that 200-300 demonstrators from a mix of pro-PA factions staged a peaceful sit-in and delivered a letter to ICRC expressing concern over the situation in Gaza.

Hebron: Commercial Strikes  
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15. (SBU) The Mayor of Hebron's economic advisor told Econoff January 5 that all of the city's shops were closed in Hebron in a "complete commercial strike." He said the city was quiet, with few trucks on the streets. The mood in Hebron is negative, he said, with "highly frustrated" residents

participating in periodic demonstrations. He noted that Hebron's settlers have generally avoided confrontations and remain "quiet."

#### PLO-Executive Committee

16. (SBU) Abu Mazen convened the PLO Executive Committee on January 4 to address the ground operation. According to PLO officials, Hamas was invited to the leadership meeting, but did not attend. The committee condemned the Israeli operation as "a massacre" and called on Arab countries to help foster Palestinian national unity and work towards a UNSCR to end the hostilities.

#### IDF Operations in the West Bank: Skirmishes and Increased Tensions

17. (SBU) Skirmishes have continued at Qalandiya checkpoint, north of Jerusalem, on a near daily basis since airstrikes began. Several incidents of rock throwing or Molotov cocktail attacks on vehicles were reported after dark on January 4 near Qalqiliya along a road connecting the Ariel and Qedumim settlements with Israel. The mayor of Jayyus, a village near Qalqiliya, told PolOff that continued IDF incursions into the village contribute to increased tensions.

WALLES